Prince Edward Island
CANADA

Health and
Social Services

Nursing Recruitment and Retention Strategy

May 2000

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Introduction

Government is committed to maintaining an adequate supply of nurses in the province now and in future.

As our largest group of health care providers, nurses contribute greatly to the health and wellness of Islanders.

Every day, nurses make a difference in the lives of others—whether it is providing care to patients in our hospitals, comfort to seniors in our long-term care facilities, or assistance to families in our communities.

The commitment and compassion nurses bring to their profession is highly valued by Islanders, government and other members of the health care team.

Government recognizes that to ensure quality health care for Islanders, two of its major challenges are to attract new nurses and retain existing nurses in the health care system.

Emerging Issues in Nursing

During the coming years, it is anticipated that there will be fewer nurses available, and at the same time, an aging population base will increase demand for nursing care.

Recognizing that the average age of nurses in the PEI health system is now 47 years, the number of nurses retiring is expected to increase substantially over the next two decades.

The demand for nursing care is expected to increase as the age of the population increases. Over the next 10 years, the proportion of the population 50 and older will increase by 33 percent.

Retaining nurses in the workplace may become more difficult due to changing work requirements.

We expect to be further challenged by declining numbers of nursing graduates, both nationally and locally. The nursing profession must remain competitive with other health care professions and career opportunities for women.

PEI's Comprehensive Approach

To address immediate and future needs, Government has initiated a comprehensive approach to ensure an adequate supply of nurses now and in future—while enhancing the quality of work life for Island nurses.

As a first step, a Health Care Stabilization Fund was implemented in 1999. This $10 million fund created 85 new full and part-time nursing positions in the province, and enabled 60 casual nurses to find permanent employment.

A Nursing Recruitment and Retention Strategy is now being introduced to address immediate and short-term needs. Initiatives outlined in the strategy will provide relief support to existing nurses and help to increase the number of nursing graduates in the province.

A comprehensive long-term Workforce Development Planning Strategy has also been initiated to improve capacity within the PEI health system to manage emerging issues, and to plan for, and manage, the future nursing workforce.

Government recognizes that to achieve success, a comprehensive partnership approach is required among government, employers and educators.

Front-line nurses and nurse managers have been consulted extensively because they have the greatest understanding of the issues and their impact, and they are the best source of viable solutions.

Government is committed to providing the necessary leadership and resources to all partners to ensure a sustainable supply of nurses and quality health services in the province.

Prince Edward Island
Nursing Recruitment and Retention Strategies

(Projected funding indicated is over a four-year period)

1.	New Nursing Positions	$3,287,600
2.	Student Sponsorships	$192,000
3.	Summer Student Employment	$1,632,000
4.	Refresher Program Cost Assistance	$28,000
5.	Clinical Education Resources	$550,000
6.	Enhanced Recruitment Resources	$200,000
7.	Workforce Development Planning	$70,000
	TOTAL	**$5,959,600**

New Nursing Positions

Sixty new permanent nursing positions will be established over the next four years to provide relief support in hospitals and long-term care facilities.

These new permanent float nurses will be cross-trained to work in several areas of care.

This initiative has been identified by nurses as a viable solution to recruiting and retaining needed relief support by making relief work more attractive to nurses.

The new positions will offer successful candidates permanent benefits and position status, guaranteed work hours and schedules, and the opportunity to become well-oriented to worksite practices and staff.

The addition of permanent nursing staff will add stability to the workplace by providing assistance with heavy workloads, and adding flexibility to the scheduling of weekend shifts and holidays to promote more balanced work and family lives for nurses.

Increased flexibility in scheduling will also help to decrease stress on the part of nurse managers and enable them to spend more time performing managerial functions.

The positions will be phased in over a period of time to allow controlled impact of the movement, particularly on the rural health regions.

Summer Student Employment Program

A new summer employment program will be introduced to provide students with employment experience in nursing practice.

The program will be offered to nursing students who have completed their second and third years at nursing schools in PEI and out of province. Currently, at the UPEI School of Nursing, there are 28 students finishing their second year and 24 finishing their third year.

Students will be employed for a 12-week period. Second-year students will receive $10 per hour, and third-year students $12.50 per hour.

Bringing the students into the health system will increase their job readiness and enable them to gain more clinical care experience and confidence in their clinical skills.

Having more students directly employed in the health system will promote integration of students into the workplace culture, and provide for further consultation on education between work sites and nursing schools.

Added exposure to the PEI health system should also encourage more students to return to PEI health facilities following graduation.

Student Sponsorships

The creation of new student sponsorships will assist students with employment and tuition costs, and provide further assistance to the health regions to secure more new nursing graduates.

Through the program, the regions will sponsor up to 20 nursing students who have completed their second or third years of a BN program by providing them with assistance of up to $2,400 with their tuition fees. In return, students will be required to work with the health region for an agreed upon period of time.

Interested students will be assessed according to criteria established by a joint committee of the Department of Health and Social Services, UPEI and the Regional Health Authorities.

This initiative will further enhance the job readiness of BN students and enable employers to better evaluate the skills and abilities of potential future staff.

Refresher Program Cost Assistance

The $1,400 fee for the Nursing Refresher Program will be reimbursed to encourage nurses to re-enter the workforce.

This incentive will be offered to nurses who pass the program and agree to work in the PEI health system for an agreed-upon period of time.

Removing the costs related to this program will help to ensure that cost is not a barrier to RNs who may wish to rejoin the nursing workforce.

Clinical Education Resources

Three new clinical nurse educator positions will be created. These additional clinical instructor positions will be attached to patient care units and available to UPEI. The instructors will provide clinical education to staff, as well as to BN students.

As part of this initiative, barriers that may deter nurses from pursuing clinical instructor positions will be identified and examined.

Increased opportunities for education and career development have been identified by nurses as a viable solution to increasing the job satisfaction and retention of existing nurses.

Enhanced Recruitment Resources

Nursing recruitment resources will be enhanced to support a comprehensive recruitment campaign which includes the marketing of PEI nursing opportunities to universities, other jurisdictions and Islanders away.

Nurses interested in relocating to Prince Edward Island will be offered assistance with relocation costs up to $5,000.

During the past year, 56 new nurses were hired by the Regional Health Authorities, of which 35 were from out of province.

This initiative is intended to strengthen Prince Edward Island's position in an increasingly competitive nurse recruitment market.

Workforce Development Planning Strategy

Government recognizes that addressing the immediate issues will not address the long-term needs of the health care system.

Strategic recruitment and retention planning must occur to ensure there is an adequate supply of nurses to meet the demand for nursing care. At the same time, workforce development planning must occur to ensure that the current and future supply of nurses develop competencies that match workplace requirements.

Government has initiated the development of a workforce development planning strategy to manage emerging issues and plan for the future nursing workforce.

Recognizing that nurses function in a complex and integrated health care environment, nursing workforce planning will be conducted as part of a comprehensive health human resource planning strategy.